DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 361 006 IR 054 700

TITLE	Survey Results: Idaho Public Library Public Relation Practices.
INSTITUTION	Idaho State Library, Boise.
PUB DATE	Oct 92
NOTE	9p.
PUB TYPE	Statistical Data (110) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Tests/Evaluation Instruments (160)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Evaluation Methods; Institutional Advancement; *Librarians; Library Planning; *Library Services; Library Surveys; Mail Surveys; Mass Media Role; Newspapers; Program Evaluation; *Publicity; Public Libraries; *Public Relations; Questionnaires; State Libraries; State Surveys
IDENTIFIERS	*Idaho

ABSTRACT

In order to study library public relations practices in Idaho, a survey was mailed to all Idaho public library directors and branch librarians in 1992. The state received 88 responses to the 141 surveys mailed. Seventy-five percent of respondents reported a lack of public relations budget, and in 76 percent of the libraries, one staff member was given primary responsibility for coordinating public relations. Newspapers were found to be the most successful way that Idaho librarians promote their services to the public, with a variety of other methods used. While Idaho librarians recognized the importance of public relations, most gave their current plans low ratings, with only 3 percent considering their plans excellent, and 44 percent calling them average. Most librarians estimated that only a small percentage of the public is aware of all library services. Most libraries do not evaluate their public relations efforts. Responses to the survey questions are presented as percentages. (SLD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

ED 361 006

Survey Results Idaho Public Library Public Relation Practices

Compiled and Published by the
Idaho State Library
October, 1992

For more information on the survey, please contact the Information Officer, Idaho State Library, 325 W. State St., Boise, ID 83702 or call (208) 334-5124.

120547200

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Stephanie Bailey-White
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Idaho Libraries and Public Relations Practices

In order to conduct successful statewide public relations efforts, it was important to research where librarians were in regards to their own localized efforts and what they wanted to learn more about. For purposes of this study, public relations is defined as:

> "The management function that identifies, establishes, and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and the various publics on whom its success or failure depends."

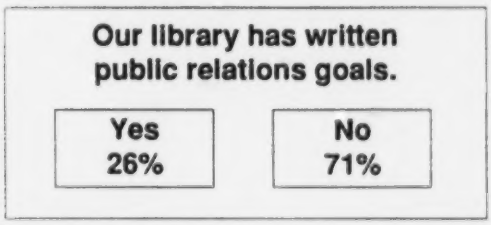
There is a definite lack of research about librarian's attitudes regarding public relations, especially specific information about what Idaho librarians are doing and what they would like to do. It will be important to conduct similar surveys in the future to get an idea of what trends there are in the field of library public relations and to have a comparative sample.

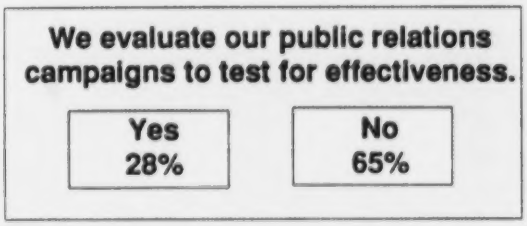
The survey was mailed to all Idaho public library directors and branch librarians during June, 1992. The State Library received 88 responses out of a total 141 possible responses. This is a good size sample and a higher response rate than anticipated. All of the survey data is included at the end of the report.

Because we do not have any statistics from previous years, it is impossible to tell how far librarians have progressed in their public relations skills. The report does provide useful information on areas that can be developed and provides an indication of what libraries are currently doing to promote their services. We hope to survey Idaho librarians on a regular basis to check progress in these areas and track successes.

According to the survey results, specific areas that can use increased attention and assistance include:

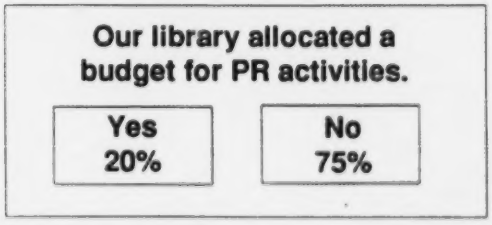
- Written public relations goals
- Evaluations of campaigns to test for effectiveness
- Defining target audiences
- Using community support groups to plan and carry out efforts
- Allocating a budget for PR activities.

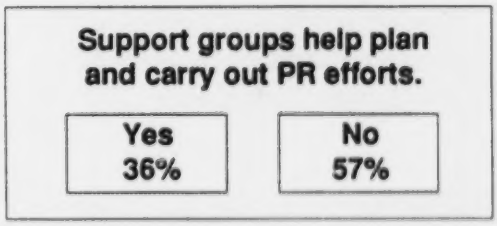




These are basic public relations practices that lay the groundwork for successful marketing and promotional activities.

The fact that 75% of the respondents reported a total lack of a public relations budget is a primary concern. Of those that indicated they allocated funds for PR activities, 14 respondents said their





budgets were under $250, one from $250 to $500, one from $1000 to $1500 and two libraries have budgets from $1500 to $3000.

The survey indicated that in 76% of libraries one staff member is given primary responsibility for coordinating public relations. 45% of the responding librarians said they have done a community needs assessment, and 49% said they have not yet completed one. 44% of librarians define a target audience before planning public relations campaigns and 52% do not. 77% of the respondents said they promote National Library Week and only 19% do not take part in the promotion.

Newspapers appear to be the most successful way Idaho libraries promote their services to the public with 63% listing it as a top method. Other methods librarians find work well in their libraries included:

- posters (36%)
- word of mouth (32%)
- library programs (17%)
- personal visits to schools, care centers, groups, etc. (16%)
- radio (16%)
- flyers (15%)
- competent and friendly service (8%)
- newsletters (8%)

Other responses included a parade entry, PTA/school bulletins, personnel involvement with the community, very visible library signs and targeting the Hispanic community.

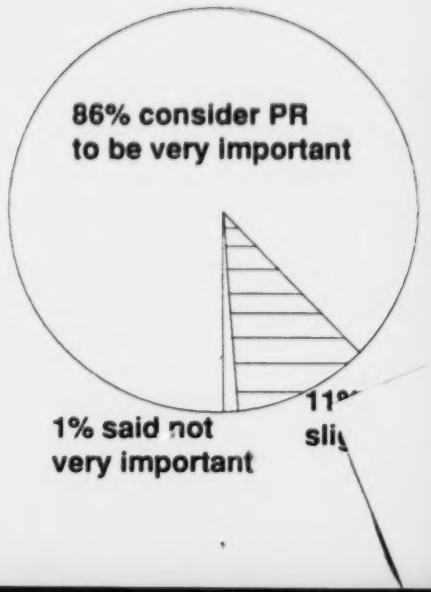
Many librarians are ready and willing to expand their public relations efforts. This area provided some insight on where to conduct training and more materials. The answers varied widely and included:

- more media coverage (9%)
- increased financial support (8%)
- people more informed about our services/hours (7%)
- reaching non-users (6%)
- more contact with schools/teachers (6%)

Other responses included: talking to groups, starting a newsletter, reaching the corporate community, trust endowments, better tie-ins with state and national promotions, and many others.

The respondents gave their current public relations plans low ratings. 35% said their plans were poor or less than desirable, 44% said they were average, 15% said good and 3% rated their plans excellent.

A significant finding of the report was the fact that 86% of the respondents consider public relations to be very important. 11% said PR was slightly important, 1 respondent said it was not very important and there were no responses in the not at all important category.

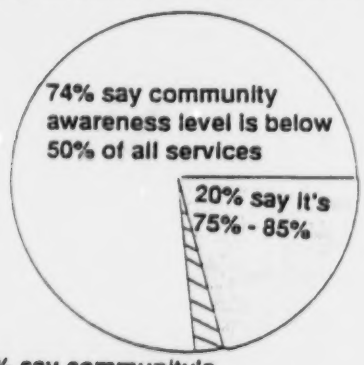


When asked what areas needed the most improvement, librarians gave us some good information for future support activities. 11% of the respondent said they needed the most improvement in all areas of public relations. Other areas included: developing a

Friends of the Library group, communication with the mayor/city council, better coordination efforts with other libraries, community group talks, communication between the library and media members, annual reports and working with community support groups.

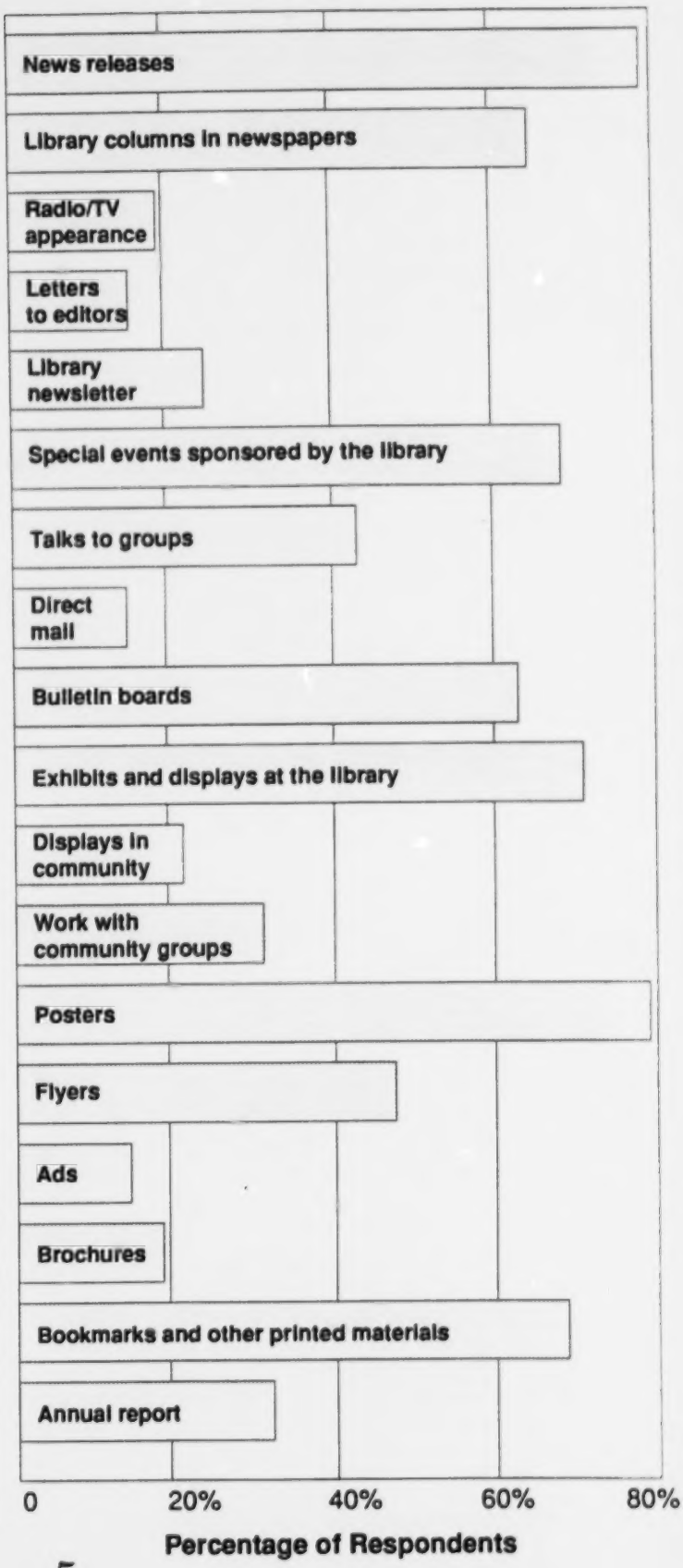
The chart to the right shows what promotional techniques the Idaho library community has used in the last year to promote their libraries. News releases, special events and posters topped the list with advertisements, direct mail and T.V. public service announcements ranking lowest.

Librarians estimated that a small percentage of their communities are aware of all their library services. 74% of the librarians estimate that the community's awareness level of all services is 50% or below.



Employee communication received high marks with 56% of the respondents reporting a rating of good or excellent communications. Methods of employee communication included meetings and memos along with some good responses like board packets with newspaper clippings, board and staff involvement, passing along everything, training and sharing.

People prefer to receive PR information through mailings, workshops, sharing sessions, samples, ideas, videos and watching what other local libraries do. The State Library hopes to follow up on as many suggestions and ideas as possible through as many means as possible. We appreciate the input we received.



Survey Data

Number in parenthesis indicates number of responses.

I am associated with a	public library	(83)
	school community	(2)
	volunteer community library	(2)
	other library (air force base)	(1)

What is your position? (51) director (19) librarian (4) branch supervisor (3) branch librarian (1) library technician (3) trustee (1) asst. director (1) head of info srvc. (1) co-director (1) community services librarian

(67) yes (21) no ( ) don't know	**One staff member is given primary responsibility for coordinating public relations.**
(23) yes (63) no (2) don't know	**Our library has written public relations goals.**
(40) yes (43) no (4) don't know	**We have done a community needs assessment of library services.**
(25) yes (58) no (4) don't know	**We evaluate our public relations campaigns to test for effectiveness.**
(39) yes (46) no (2) don't know	**We define a target audience before we plan a public relations campaign.**
(32) yes (51) no (1) don't know	**Community support groups help plan and carry out public relations efforts.**
(18) yes (66) no (2) don't know	**Our library allocates a budget for PR activities.**
(68) yes (17) no (1) don't know	**We promote National Library Week.**

If you agreed that your library allocates a budget for public relations activities, how much is it?

(14) 0 - $250 (1) $250 - $500 (0) $500-$1000 (1) $1000 - $1500 (2) $1500 - $3000

What are the 3 most successful ways your library promotes library services to the public?

newspaper (55)
posters (32)
word of mouth (28)
library programs i.e. summer reading programs, Let's Talk About It, story hour (15)
radio (14)
personal visits to schools, care centers, groups etc. (14)
flyers (13)
competent and friendly service, newsletters (7 each)
in-house displays (5)
staff, brochures (4 responses each)
(3 responses each) bookmarks, notices to school children, advertising on commxzunity and business bulletin boards, PTA /school bulletins, working with Friends of the Library groups, collection excellence, library sign visible from highway/ street (listing events), columns
(2 responses each) attention to community's expectations, media announcements, school groups visiting the library, (other responses) personnel involved in community, church bulletins, bookmobile services, local fair, Nite of 1,000 Stars, T.V., parade entry, work with scout troops, library orientation, booklists, outreach, town meeting room - copier, presentations to clubs and organizations, telephone notification to target groups, offer interlibrary loans, monthly calendar, individual mailings, targeting the Hispanic community, letters, in-house advertisements

How would you rate your public relations plan now (please check one)?

(15) poor (16) less than desirable (39) average (13) good (3) excellent

The areas we'd like to expand our PR efforts in are:

more media coverage (8)
increased financial support (7)
people more informed about our services/hours (6)
(5 responses each) more contact with teachers/school, reaching non-users
(4 responses each) more library programs and services, newsletter
(3 responses each) talking to groups, more time, more patrons, regular staff-generated press releases,
(2 responses each) Friends group, better grade of computer graphics, need for volunteer support, a budget for public relations activities, internal signage and directions, community image, communicating the benefits of libraries, work with community support groups, reaching those distant from library (16-20 miles away), promoting children's services, (others) more bookmobile contact, input from patrons, more community services, better service, speaking to local organizations, promoting basic library skills, reaching non-users, TV PSA's, trust endowments, considering PR aspects in all we do, display case at entrance, better methods of presenting PR, more originality, extended staffing, internal PR, corporate community, better tie-ins with state and national promotions, learn patrons names, reaching seniors and the disabled, reaching prominent citizens who could contribute toward a new addition, video/slide show to take to groups, more adult patrons, continued personal attention, promoting adult literacy programs, building project, need some goals, promoting our summer reading program, PR training, volunteer support, more brochures/handouts on general library information and specific topics, fund raising, assign one person in charge of PR, more ideas, wider distribution of news events concerning library, better newspaper relations, special events, Spanish-speaking population pamphlets, news to reach the male population, staff education, service to "shut ins," info on how to have a better plan, reaching newcomers to the area

How important do you consider public relations?

(76) very important (10) slightly important (1) not very important (0) Not at all important

We have used the following to promote the library during the last year:

(70) News releases
(57) library columns in local newspaper
(17) appearing on a radio or TV talk show
(28) community needs assessment
(15) letters to the editor by library staff
(15) T.V. public service announcements
(27) radio public service announcements
(22) library newsletter
(66) special events sponsored by the library
(39) talks to community groups and organizations
(13) direct mail
(56) bulletin boards
(63) exhibits and displays at the library
(20) displays somewhere else in the community
(28) work with community support groups
(70) posters
(43) flyers
(13) advertisements
(18) brochures
(61) bookmarks and other printed material
(28) annual report
Others - please list: foundation fundraising, staff visits to schools for assemblies/programs (2), staff visits to nursing homes, care centers, city newsletter, bond campaign, co-sponsoring appearances and guest speakers, Let's Talk About It, work with school, summer reading program, used book sale, over the counter promotions, discussions, parent/teacher association newsletter page, printed book bags, marque, library events, library T-shirts

What communication areas need the most improvement?

all (10)
(5 responses each) community group talks, more news articles published regularly
(4) work with community support groups
(3 responses each) library newsletter, reaching non-users, community needs assessment, communication between library/ newspaper, other media, radio, library column,
(2 responses each) develop a Friends of the Library group, news releases, getting beyond local media limitations and problems, T.V. visibility, making users more aware of services offered, communications with board/staff, public service announcements, publications,
(others) cooperation with community groups and schools, internal communication - house organ/interdepartmental, funding for staffing feasibility to perform above tasks, brochures, getting in "area" newspaper rather that local, community displays and programs, master calendar of library events (yr. long), better coordination efforts with other libraries, recruiting volunteers, getting whole story out to public, need a local paper, policy communication with staff and public, getting community input, one on one patron relations, displays and exhibits, bulletin boards, communications with schools, direct mail, public service role in community, funding sources and budget constraints, Board to director to public communications, annual report, story hours/summer reading program, multimedia presentations for community groups/city council, communication with mayor/city council

What would you say your community's awareness level is of all the library services you provide?

(29) below 40% awareness (36) 50% awareness

(13) 75% awareness (5) 85% awareness (2) above 85% awareness

What are the top 3 methods used for employee communication (employees, volunteers, board)?
meetings/verbal (52), memos (22), phone (15), bulletin board (6), grapevine (5), mail (4),
(3 each) informal gatherings, and training, posting agendas & minutes
(2 each) E-Mail, librarian passes everything on
others: only person, occasionally have a volunteer, "see me" notes, frequent news, Board packets with newspaper clippings, written procedures, sharing, policy handbook, board involvement, monthly reports, Board members visit library, video training tapes, calendar notes

How would you rate your employee communications (please check one)?

(0) poor (5) less than desirable (23) average (32) good (16) excellent

Please list ways you prefer to receive information regarding public relations tools and ideas:

workshops (22)
by mail (15)
printed materials (13)
newsletter (6)
(3 each) letters, educational videos, regional meetings with other librarians
(2 each) samples, ideas, sharing sessions
others: professional journals, informal communication, inexpensively and in a timely fashion prior to need, watching what other local libraries do, brochures, in person, on phone, fact sheets, examples, visuals, ILA, flyers, 1/2 day seminars, workshops within 50 miles, mail addressed to trustees, include hands on activities i.e. writing an article for paper

Data from supplemental survey

Does your library have a pre-school reading program

(58) yes (26) No

If yes, what is the approximate of children that attend the program?

12, 35, 4, 200 - 225/ week for pre-school Summer reading programs, 200 pre-schoolers, 50/week, 40, 10, 5, 15, 30, 50, 75, 35, 5, 10, 25, 4, 16, 10, 5, 4, 25, 6, 14, 20, 4, 11, 11, 90, 20, 29, 13, 23, 6, 200, 20, 25, 15, 4, 20, 12, 50, 28, 4, 9, 45, 4, 9, 25, 12, 45, 20, 35, 12, 12, 75

Total, 1605. Average, 29.

If your library has a "Friends" group, approximately how many people are members?

Foundation 9 Board members, 30 foundation friends, 15, 125, 18 paid members - 25 non-paid, 50, 10, 22, 40, 40, 65, 180, 15, 25, 4, 9, 2, 70, 20, 50, 12, 20, 10, 30, 25, 90, 9, 60, 49, 7, 3, 15, 25, 30, 35

Total, 1244. Average, 37.